

Other Viewpoints

Not every voter has photo ID handy

While many Kansans believe it is reasonable to require voters to show photo identification at the polls, special circumstances may make it difficult for some Kansans to obtain the necessary IDs. At least for the first elections that require photo ID, state and county election officials should make an extra effort to inform voters and make the process easier.

Nursing homes, for instance, have expressed concern that many of their residents may not have appropriate IDs even though they are registered to vote. Some no longer drive, so they don't have a driver's license, and they may not have taken the trouble to obtain a nondriver's identification card.

It may require a little extra effort, but obtaining an ID won't be that difficult for most voters. However, for some, the process may pose obstacles that are hard to clear. Registered Kansas voters can request a free photo ID, but they still must go to a driver's license station to obtain the ID. If they don't drive, getting to the station and enduring the long waits currently being reported at many Kansas Division of Motor Vehicle offices might be a problem.

To obtain an ID, people must present other forms of identification. That may be fairly easy for someone born in Kansas, but it gets more complicated if you were born in another state. Kansans can obtain a free copy of their birth certificates to facilitate the ID process, but people born elsewhere would need to contact their native state and probably pay a fee to obtain a birth certificate. If women have changed their names as a result of marriage or divorce, they also would have to document that change with a marriage certificate or divorce decree.

None of these obstacles is insurmountable, but it takes time and effort.

The Kansas Secretary of State's office and county election officials are trying to deal with various voter concerns, including those expressed by nursing home officials. Hopefully, their efforts will be successful. The Aug. 7 primary will be the first statewide election at which photo IDs will be required. Although participation in primary elections usually is low, this primary involves more than the usual number of contested races, and it should offer at least some indication of how big an issue or problem the new voter ID law will pose for voters and election officials.

— *The Lawrence Journal-World, The Associated Press*

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- U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov
- State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us
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Congressional Dead Letter Office



By any measure, Free Fair's a champion

As today marks the official beginning of the Thomas County Free Fair, with entries being checked in, the 4-H Horse Show and the first night of the rodeo, it's probably a happy coincidence that I ran across a list of how we measure things.

For sure, when there's a fair, things are being measured.

The casual visitors may be measuring how much cotton candy a kid can eat without throwing up on the tilt-a-whirl.

Others are more serious about their measures. Weeks or months of effort come down to a ribbon, a ranking.

Rodeo riders may be champions – or scratch.

A bucket calf may get a purple ribbon or a red.

Decorated cakes, garden vegetables and cut flowers, rockets and welding projects – all are out there to be judged. It's not just 4-H or FFA, either. Open-class entries may include beautiful homemade jellies or quilts that have been years in the making, not to mention antique tractors lovingly restored over many seasons; the entries of adults are just as important as those of youth.

Here at the *Colby Free Press*, we take the county fair seriously. We do our best to cover as many events as possible – and there are a lot of them. There's entertainment and exhibits, showmanship and athletic events. Not to



Marian Ballard

• **Collection Connections**

mention the food.

Food deserves its very own paragraph. Of course there's food entered as exhibits, but there's also food to eat. Almost any kind of fried, salty, sweet, wet or cold treat you can think of, along with a few you can't. And don't forget the free barbecue, right in there bumping elbows with 4-H concessions, Lions concessions and all the rest.

Some of the most interesting parts of the fair, though, are the athletic events. There's the rodeo, in which at least half of the athletes have four feet. And then there are the horse shows. There again, half the athletes have four feet.

At the open class horse show Saturday, several things struck me; one was just how hard everyone in the arena had to work, horses and horsemen-and-women alike. The heat was a killer, but there they were, showing off their best moves for the judge – along with an audience willing to suffer in support.

At the dog shows a week ago, I understand it was the same. No matter the hardships, everyone worked hard to make the event a success for every competitor.

The livestock judging later this week will no doubt reflect the same can-do attitude in the face of weather conditions that are difficult for both animals and exhibitors. This is the hard part of the fair, the part never seen by those who go to the carnival or wander through the exhibits. This is the part about keeping animals groomed and healthy, and their pens clean, whether it's 80 degrees or 110 degrees.

It's also about some of the most important lessons learned at the fair, lessons that can't be measured with a ribbon or a trophy. These are life lessons – patience, sticking with a task even when it gets tough or boring, accepting responsibility for the life and well-being of others.

The kids work together, the younger ones learning from the older ones, who in turn learned from those who are now graduated from the clubs. And those graduates have taken far more away from the county fair than an overdose of cotton candy.

Marian Ballard has collected careers as counselor, librarian, pastor, and now copy editor for the Colby Free Press. She collects ideas, which are more portable than other stuff.

In heat and drought, hope still lives

*Sow the seed in the ground below
Fall on your knees and pray real slow
That rain will come and kiss the seed
And bless you with all that you need*

— Joe Ely, "All That You Need"

Drive through the Kansas countryside this summer, and that refrain could be running through the heads of many a farmer or rancher. Rain has become a scarce commodity in all 105 counties of the state for more than a year since the moisture spigot from up above seems to be shut off tight.

Traveling down the roads in the Kansas River valley, some of the corn and beans still appear to be tall, lush and green. But looks can be deceiving.

Most of the corn and beans along U.S. 24 are irrigated. Drive away from the irrigated fields, and the picture changes.

Twenty-five days of 100-degree heat and counting has put the kibosh on dry-land corn, milo and beans. During this period when blast-furnace heat and wind swept through this productive valley, corn literally burned up as farmers watched.

"During these hot afternoons, you can see the corn turning white," Chris Campbell, a Leavenworth County farmer-stockman, says. "Just before it dies, it gets kinda' grayish-white before it turns brown. You can smell it burning."

Campbell says he hasn't filled silage for more than 10 years, but he just dug a large pit to fill with his drought-damaged corn on July 18. This chopped corn will be used to supplement feed for his 150 head of momma cows later in the year and this winter.

"We're worried about the test weight," Campbell says. "Our corn will probably yield less than 30 bushels per acre – if we can get the



John Schlageck

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Kansas Farm Bureau

corn into the machine."

The crop he leaves to harvest may fall over before he has an opportunity to cut it. That's why much of the corn is going into the trench silo and during the middle of July – unheard of.

The Leavenworth County farmer has already started supplementing the feed of his cattle in two pastures with hay and protein. He says he hates to feed his winter supply of feed in July because his hay crop is yielding less than half what it generally does.

Last winter was great for cattlemen. There were few if any calving problems, temperatures were mild, the cattle didn't eat as much feed, but now they're paying the piper.

Campbell will be rotating his pastures, running electric fence down near the creek banks and continuing to dip into his winter forage rations throughout the rest of 2012.

The long-time Leavenworth County farmer, who started working on his own in 1980, ranks this year's dry weather, "as bad as he can remember." He understands this year's drought will affect everyone's bottom line. Rising costs with little or no return will eat crop and livestock producers alive – especially if the drought continues next year or the year after.

Like his peers across the Sunflower State, Campbell believes he's in a battle for his livelihood. Like his grandfather and father before him, Campbell is well connected to the soil.

He wants to continue growing crops and livestock on the land.

Even though farming comes with pain and strife, he's committed to working beneath the clear blue sky while trying to make a living with his family. Campbell loves his vocation and realizes there's more to farming corn, milo and beans than just planting the seeds. He's been around long enough to know he must take the good years with the bad.

"You have to have a little help from the Lord above," he says. "If he's willing, we'll live to grow and harvest better crops next year."

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Write us

The *Colby Free Press* encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• **Bruce Tinsley**

